

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 SAB-01 IO-10 AID-05 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

/064 W

----- 033355

O R 141207Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2885

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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DEPT PASS TO SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: N/A DECON 2-14-76

TAGS: PFOR SY IS US XF

SUBJECT: SECRETARY KISSINGER'S VISIT TO SYRIA--LEBANESE PRESS
REACTION

1. WHILE BEIRUT PRESS ASSESSMENTS AND EVALUATIONS
OF SECRETARY KISSINGER'S FEB 13 VISIT TO DAMASCUS
GENERALLY RUN GAMUT BETWEEN CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM AND
OUTRIGHT PESSIMISM, ARTICLE BY EDOUARD SAAB IN
FRENCH-LANGUAGE L'ORIENT-LE JOUR FEB 14 STRIKES US
AS WORTH REPORTING, IF ONLY BECAUSE OF SAAB'S
PROVEN ACCESS TO WELL-PLACED SOURCES IN SARG
HIERARCHY.

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2. ACCORDING TO SAAB, SECRETARY WAS ABLE TO "PROMISE

NOTHING CONCRETE" TO SYRIANS AND COULD ONLY URGE THAT THEY BE PATIENT WHILE NEXT STEP IN SINAI DISENGAGEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT GOES FORWARD. PRES ASSAD AND OTHER SARG LEADERS REPRTEDELY REACTED NEGATIVELY, TELLING SECRETARY THAT THEY COULD ONLY CONCLUDE THAT USG WAS WORKING TO SEW DISCORD AND DIVISION IN ARAB RANKS. SSAB ALSO REPRTEED THAT SARG HAS DECIDED TO REFUSE ATTEND NEXT STAGE OF GEENEVA CONFERENCE AND TO SEEK RAPPROACHMENT WITH IRAQ AND FEDAYEEN "REJECTION FRONT" IF ANY SEPARATE AGREEMENT FOR FURTHER DISENGAGEMENT IN SINAI IS REACHED BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL.

3. SAAB QUOTED SECRETARY AS TELLING ASSAD: "I HAVE HAD GREAT DEAL OF TROUBLE IN CONVINCING ISRAELIS TO WITHDRAW IN SINAI. IF I PRESS THEM ANY FURTHER (RE GOLAN), RABIN GOVT WILL STIFFEN ITS POSITION AND CAUSE A NEW DEADLOCK (RE SINAI). PLEASE UNDERSTAND ME AND PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE. STEP-BY-STEP DIPLOMACY CAN ONLY GAIN ISRAELI CONCESSIONS IN SUCCESSIVE STAGES, AND I PROMISE YOU IN NAME OF MY GOVT TO USE MY INFLUENCE AND EVEN PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO GAIN FURTHER WITHDRASWALS IN GOLAN. HOWEVER, THIS CAN HAPPEN ONLY FOLLOWING A NEW IISRAELI-EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT. ISRAEL'S LEADERS HAVE ALREADY HAD HARD TIME NEUTRALIZING THEIR CRITICS WHO ADOPT MAXIMALIST POSITIONS AND REMAIN INTRANSIGENT AND ANNEXATIONIST. WE AMERICANS ALSO HAVE TOO MANY OF OUR OWN INTERNAL PROBLEMS TO RESOLVE BETWEEN NOW AND OUR 1976 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS." SAAB CLAIMED SECRETARY ADDED THAT MORE TIME WAS NEEDED FOR "CONDITIONS TO RIPEN" BEFORE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA COULD BE WORKED OUT, AND THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF DISCUSSING PROBABILITIES AND MODALITIES OF WEST BANK DISENGAGEMENT IN MEANTIME.

4. AFTER REPORTING ASSAD'S NEGATIVE REACTION AS NOTED ABOVE, SAAB SAID FEELING IS NOW WIDESPREAD AMONG SYRIAN LEADERSHIP THAT SARG MAY BE ON VERGE OF MAJOR POLICY REVERSAL IF SAEAT CONTINUES TO FOLLOW NEGOTIATING PATH ALONE AND IGNORE HIS EARLIER PROMISES

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TO KEEP IN STEOP WITH SYRIA IN ORDER PROTECT OTHER ARAB INTERESTS. ACCORDING TO SAAB, THIS MEANS THAT BOTH SARG AND PLO "MODERATES" WOULD INCREASE THEIR OVERTURES TO IRAQ AND ARAB "REJECTION FRONT" AND JOIN IN COMMON EFFORT TO HEAD OFF "PARTIAL SOLUTION" OF ME CONFLICT. HOUGHTON

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECRETARY'S PARTY.

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